

TDM SUCCESS STORY:

"Rideshare" & "Vanpool" Programs Encourage Sharing the Ride on Washington State Ferries

Initiated in 1991, the Washington State Ferries' unique "Rideshare Program" for small carpools, and "Vanpool Program" for larger pools of five or more, guarantee boarding for registered vehicles on the most popular ferry routes at nineteen multi-county ferry terminals. As congestion and waits for ferries have increased in recent years, the lure of a guaranteed spot on the ferry, particularly at peak commute times, encourages sharing the ride.

Background

Rideshare Program for small carpools:

- ♦ Small carpools of at least three riders may register for the Rideshare Program. Registered carpools pay regular ferry fees and their Rideshare Priority Loading Permit is transferable between carpool vehicles.

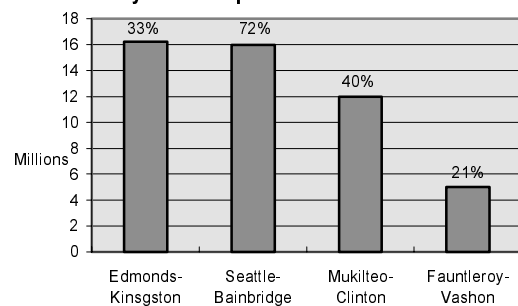
Vanpool Program for larger pools:

- ♦ Larger groups may register for the Vanpool Program with a minimum of five riders. Registered vanpools are not charged a vehicle fare for the ferry. And, if there are at least five people in the vehicle, the driver travels free.
- ♦ Some additional requirements for registration in the Vanpool Program include:
 - ♦ The vanpool is always charged for a minimum of four passengers.
 - ♦ Vehicles registered in the Vanpool Program must have Rideshare License Plates issued through the Department of Licensing, and only the licensed vehicle may be used as the ferry vanpool vehicle (this licensing requirement does not apply to carpools).

Both programs:

- ♦ Registered carpools and vanpools get priority loading on the sailing of their choice if they arrive at least ten minutes before the boat is scheduled to leave.
- ♦ For both programs participants may register by mail or at the fare collection booth, with a \$10 registration fee for vanpools.
- ♦ Registration in the programs is renewed annually. Participants must have a minimum usage of three days per week for at least two months in order to participate.

Ferry Ridership Increases 1980s to 1990s



Source: Puget Sound Regional View,
Puget Sound Regional Council, May 2000

Stats

Vanpool Program:

- ♦ Currently, vanpools traveling by ferry remove the equivalent of 2,312 SOVs (single occupant vehicles) each day from ferry sailings. The ferry system would have to schedule 22 additional sailings daily of its largest boats to accommodate the vehicles that vanpoolers would otherwise drive on board.¹

- ♦ Early records show that 64 vanpools were registered in 1991. By 1999 the number of regular vanpools increased threefold to 207 vanpools.²

Stats, continued

Ferry Ridership Increases:

- ♦ The two major cross-Sound routes, Edmonds-Kingston and Seattle-Bainbridge Island, experienced the greatest increases in ridership during the decade, growing by 33% and 72%, respectively. The Mukilteo-Clinton route gained almost 12 million riders, a 40% increase. The Fauntleroy-Vashon-Southworth ridership increased by 21%. The Pt. Defiance-Tahlequah ridership increased by 56% (see graph front page).³
- ♦ Total system ferry ridership increased by 34% in the Puget Sound region during the 1990s. From 1998 to 1999 alone, ferry ridership for Puget Sound ferry routes grew by more than 600,000 to equal 24 million riders.⁴

Why are these TDM programs successful?

A unique and simple rideshare privilege:

- ♦ Priority loading on the ferry has become a familiar privilege for carpoolers and vanpoolers who regularly commute during congested peak hours. It is simple to register and participate in the two pooling programs, and, the Vanpool Program in particular has contributed to significant growth of vanpools utilizing the ferry system. In fact, 11% of all vanpools in the Puget Sound region commute on the ferries.

Growing demand and congestion is affecting ferry travel:

- ♦ Due to the tremendous growth in ferry ridership (see Stats above), boarding delays are common on the most popular ferry routes, particularly during commuting hours and the peak summer season. Currently demand outstrips supply for HOV priority loading privileges, with waiting lists at some docks.

^{1,2}Washington State Department of Transportation, Office of Urban Mobility. *Puget Sound Regional Vanpool Market Study, Executive Summary*. June 2000. Web: wsdot.wa.gov/mobility/tdm/tdmhome.html

^{3,4}Puget Sound Regional Council. *Regional View: Ferries Serve Growing Number of Riders*. May 2000. Web: psrc.org.

For more information about Priority Loading Program registration: 1-888-808-7977. Washington State Ferries Web: wsdot.wa.gov/ferries

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